

# African Cultural Memory in Fred Khumalo's *Touch my Blood* and its Metafictional Para-texts

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## Abstract

This article gleans its momentum from Ronit Frenkel's palimpsestic observation that the local and the global exist as "coeval discourses of signification in South African transitional literature," with the intention to push the boundaries set in a recent issue of the Journal of Black Studies that carried a literature-inspired title, "Cultural Memory and Ethnic Identity Construction in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*" by Zhou Quan. The latter prompted a consideration whether a peculiarly South African literary representation of cultural memory is possible or not, or whether it is monolithic or multiplicitous. Therefore, partly in response, I introduce the transcendent idea of allochthonous memory, taking my cues from Molefi Kete Asante's *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge* where he elucidates that the Afrocentrist "seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data" (p. 6). One such paradigm is Allochthonous memory, which is here defined as a configuration of cultural memory that finds expression in references that are simultaneously intertextual, transnational, transcultural, and ethical.

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“And I still urge you to struggle. Struggle for the memory of your ancestors. Struggle for wisdom”—Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015, p. 151), *Between the World and Me*

This article gleans its momentum from Ronit Frenkel’s (2013, p. 25) palimpsestic observation that the local and the global exist as “coeval discourses of signification in South African transitional literature,” with the intention to push the boundaries set in a recent issue of the *Journal of Black Studies* that carried a literature-inspired title, “Cultural Memory and Ethnic Identity Construction in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*” by Zhou Quan (2019). The latter prompted a consideration whether a peculiarly South African literary representation of cultural memory is possible or not, or whether it is monolithic or multiplicitous. Therefore, partly in response, I introduce the transcendent idea of allochthonous memory, taking my cues from Molefi Kete Asante’s (1990) *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge* where he elucidates that the Afrocentrist “seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data” (p. 6).

With respect to autobiographical expression of codes and motifs, a conventional delineation of cultural memory by Jan Assmann (1995) today demands augmentation, particularly where such memory “comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose cultivation serves to convey and stabilize that society’s self-image and awareness of unity and particularity” (p. 132). In terms of unity and particularity, Zhou Quan (2019) in the latest issue of *Journal of Black Studies* draws attention to “the relationships between the representation of cultural memory and the construction of ethnic cultural identity” (p. 555), thus prompting further problematization in order to address the key crisis in the African world: “the profoundly disturbing decentering of African people from a subject position within their own narrative” (Asante, 2017, p. 231). To cure this defect, this paper on African autobiography proposes the paradigm of allochthonous memory ostensibly to usher in an Afrocentric layering and centering of a subject position.

Allochthonous memory is here defined as a configuration of cultural memory that finds expression in references that are simultaneously intertextual,

transnational, transcultural, and ethical. In the two texts by Fred Khumalo under analysis, allochthonous memory allows for a constant parodical and allegorical revision of history proper through the narrative codes of autobiography as the two texts negotiate what Ronit Frenkel (2013) describes as “the movement between transitional cultural production and post-transitional literature of the present”(p. 25).

Such allochthonous memory is nowhere better exemplified than in the acclaimed multiple-award winning author Fred Khumalo’s (2007) memoir *Touch my Blood* and its intertextual filiation to his metafictional *Seven Steps to Heaven* (2008). This demonstrates a preponderance of allochthonous memory as a function of intertextual autobiography that ethically enhances personal(ized) history. However, in priming a textual filiation between two of his own texts across disparate genres, Fred Khumalo clearly confirms Ogede’s (2011, p. 2) wisdom regarding intertextuality: “that the plurality of genuinely new works is often pulled from pre-existing texts.” This readily calls to mind an intertextual filiation between James Baldwin’s epistle to his son in *The Fire Next Time* (1963) and Ta-Nehisi Coates’s exhortation to his son Samori and us that we “must struggle to remember this past in all its nuance, error and humanity”(p. 70). However, as evidenced in the infamous Ottawa nightclub fight incident between exiles, allochthonous memory in Fred Khumalo disavows the idea of some essentialized notion of black cultural memory that is posited as just existing as either monolithic blackness or a totalizing experience of intertextuality. Atop the priority of re-establishing what Kiene Brillenburg Wurth (2018) calls “materialist ontologies” (p. 249), the intention here is to bring to view new multi-faceted dimensions to (trans) cultural memory: a complex intertextual turn that is commensurate with what Masemola (2017) frames as the “angst and belonging that attend becoming to the African world and its diasporic reaches” (p. 194) in *Black South African Autobiography After Deleuze*. To be sure, the pedestal case of complexity of the dimensions of belonging and unbelonging might well be exemplified by Molefi Kete Asante’s account in his memoir, *As I run toward Africa* (2011, p. 248) of his interrogation by three ZANU officials when he conducted research on David Gweshe in Dzivarekwa, Zimbabwe, where he was viewed with suspicion. Its narrative disavows autochthony—a phenomenon described by Peter Geschiere in *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship in Africa and Europe* (2009) as the exclusionary claim to a fixed place of identity by virtue of being “born from the soil” with greater prioritization of exclusive belonging than the recognition of mobility. Fred Khumalo’s narrative of allochthonous memory disavows such autochthony that is fixed to a locale by retaining a fluid and transnational character. It straddles Canada and South Africa and Zimbabwe, even the urban and the rural.

Similarly, the constructed temporality—or, indeed what Carolin and Frenkel (2019) describe as ‘the transcultural flows’ (p. 14)—of *Touch My Blood* (2006) opens with a scene in Ottawa, Canada, where he finds himself in a nightclub fight with a South African exile; the plot of *Seven Steps To Heaven* (2007) crosses over to Harare in Zimbabwe, where Thulani is to face the death penalty. Whereas the tension of *unbelonging* amongst blacks has been recently deftly framed in Foucauldian terms by Edith Dinong Phaswana (2019) as “overdetermined from without” (p. 161), in its analysis, this paper also recognizes merit in Ronit Frenkel’s (2013) discernment of the fecundity of a palimpsestic reading that lies in the revelation “of how one transitional experience is already present in another” (p. 25). This is particularly evident in the prioritization of the overlapping memory of such transitional experience that resides in the intertextuality between texts.<sup>1</sup> While it is noteworthy that the book title of Fred Kumalo’s *Seven Steps To Heaven* alludes to a Miles Davis album of the same name—which effectively contributes to “the becoming visible of the medium of the book as an object of analysis (Brillenburgh Wurth, 2018, p. 252)—a palimpsestic reading of its *Touch My Blood* pre-texts calls for a new operationalization of “an ability to inscribe black difference into intertextuality: in an intertextual revision of precursory texts”(Gates, 1983, p. 692).

The two para-texts exhibit a complex temporality that can be discerned in a type of memory that straddles the canvas of the textual narrative of an ontological-historical axis that adopts a perspective of (personalized/textualized) history: allochthonous memory. In this case, the filiation of pre-existing is between two of Khumalo’s texts, for the reason best outlined by Paulina Grzeda (2013):

A marked preoccupation with history and an urge to re-visit and critically re-examine the past has been at the heart of a large body of postcolonial texts. Similarly, the need to re-negotiate historical accounts became a pressing concern of South African literature in the wake of the demise of apartheid, most notably in the period of political transition from the apartheid system to democratic rule, roughly covering the entire decade of the 1990s. In a society where identities were long allocated and imposed from above, where memories from the margins were systematically suppressed in the pre-colonial, colonial, as well as apartheid era, the urge to revisit the past and reassess its implications for contemporaneity proved indispensable for the processes of reconciliation and identity reconstruction instigated by the decline of apartheid. Nevertheless, South African writers at large have never undertaken the task of critically interrogating history uniformly. (p. 154)

What this means, in the present context, is that in Khumalo’s work the instinct to critically interrogate history is inscribed by a vacillation between memoir

and metafiction, swinging on a pendant of an intertextually weighted pendulum of allochthonous memory. This is very deliberate on the part of Fred Khumalo, whose two texts under discussion engage the past with a sophisticated line of continuity based on cyclical overlaps of past and present, as well as the autobiographical and fictional figures on a national and transnational scale. This is the basis on which Grant Andrews (2019) endorses Masemola's assessment that Khumalo's *Seven Steps to Heaven* "marshals allochthonous memory and transcultural intertextuality to the extent that race, gender and masculinities are represented through a multiplicity and temporality that are sophisticated enough to transcend and/or implode the binary oppositions" (p. 5). The link between allochthonous memory and intertextuality is patterned on the blurring of boundaries as each paratext, each representational temporality, and each character finds coeval expression in a palimpsestic overlay. Thus, between the two texts, the signifying time of allochthonous memory inscribes fluidity.

## Intertextuality and Allochthonous Memory

Specifically, intertextuality that involves the different genres of the same author's autobiography (*Touch My Blood*) and metafiction (*Seven Steps to Heaven*) allows incredible purchase for not only tinkering with the scales of literary debt but also to innovatively transform the site of memory into a perspective of personalized/textualized history: allochthonous memory. We read in Simon Gikandi's *Oxford History of the Novel in English: the Novel in Africa and the Caribbean since 1950*, that this memory expresses a yearning that is prompted by an admixture of disillusionment and nostalgia in its commitment to other texts and contexts in a manner that deliberately disavows the autochthony or exceptionalism of South African experience.<sup>2</sup>

In the autobiographical *Touch My Blood* and the metafictional *Seven Steps to Heaven* such allochthonous memory—a mode of reinventing a long perspectival horizon of recalling the past from multiple temporal and spatial deities that constitute substrata that are aesthetically and ethically removed from the original historical setting it describes—lends a lens that consciously articulates the *inventedness* of personal history and fiction plus the connection between them. Accordingly, this article's analysis bases its framing of the intertextual thrust on what Ronit Frenkel (in her palimpsestic reading) characterizes as "post-transitional texts that circle around issues of place and space, while also revealing the shifts in South African cultural history, as they comprise a set of related perspectives that inscribe meaning across times and spaces" (p. 27). The transnational oscillation between Ottawa and Durban in *Touch My Blood* (2006), or even Johannesburg and Harare in *Seven Steps* confirms what Shane Graham

(2013, p. 509)—extending Kwame Appiah’s take on cosmopolitanism as a process of simultaneous “conversation” and “contamination”—aptly describes as a “simultaneously ethical and aesthetic response to the transnational movements of people, commodities, and capital.” Whilst Fred Khumalo’s *Seven Steps to Heaven* can be considered to be a sequel to the award-winning *Bitches Brew* (—on the strength of the common centrality of the shebeen queen figure—this paper will marshal evidence to show an ethical intertextual filiation with (and re-interpretation of) the autobiographical antecedent in *Touch My Blood*).

It is noteworthy that Fred Khumalo the writer avers that one is “part of a long human narrative. You don’t exist in isolation” (p. 15). Belonging to that long human narrative is occasioned by the connections established between both the protagonists of the two texts and the texts they coterminously inhabit. In *Seven Steps* the quasi-biofictional dimension becomes manifest in the reappearance of Fred Khumalo’s actual father Mandlakayise in *Touch My Blood* (17) whose name is in the contracted version of “Mandla” in *Seven Steps* (12–17). At both textual and ontological levels, the discursive motors of belonging are enabled by allochthonous memory’s disruptive refusal to claim an unattached particularity of a *sui generis* existence. The following passage is worth considering:

Whose son are you? The question and greeting imbues you with a sense of humanity because it doesn’t dismiss you as an abstract entity, but someone who is supposed to have intimate connections with the rest of humanity. *Wie se laaitie is jy?*

Again, *the question asks you, subtly, to peel away the many layers of yourself for the pleasure and scrutiny of the inquirer. In a way, it robs you of your individuality, which as a concept, is still anathema to African society.*

(*Touch My Blood*, p.15—emphasis added)

The Afrocentric collective identity demanded of Fred Khumalo recuperates what Muchativugwa Liberty Hove (2018) frames as identities that are “messy, contaminated, and hybridized through the processes of erasure, silencing, mobility, and exclusion” (p. 51). To question the young Fred Khumalo is to prompt the memory of his Khumalo lineage. If anything, Khumalo continues in this memoir to observe:

...the question offers possibilities of acceptance. Perhaps by opening yourself to the other, you might discover- in fact, there’s an inherent hope on the part of the other- that you share the same ancestor. Blood of my blood.

So, when you introduce yourself in African society, your start by saying, “I am so and so, son of so and so, who did such and such to so and so’s son, when so and so’s son did this and that, under such and such circumstances. . .”

The introduction becomes a narrative that says that you acknowledge and respect where you come from. This tie with the past is inevitable. (pp. 15–16)

It is a question, therefore, that prompts a connection to the worldview most closely associated with their cultural heritage (Mazama, 2001). Allochthonous memory here conjoins the individual Khumalo to the collective African existence. According to Simphiwe Sesanti (2019, p. 439), this constitutes “a re-memberment” in the wake of Africans’ loss of memory.

## The Frame of Allochthonous Memory

According to Michael Lackey (2018, p. 7), “All writing is told from a particular perspective and is based on an arbitrary selection of facts.” However, taking stock of Ama Mazama’s (2001, p. 393) observation that “the organizing principle that determines the perception of all reality is the centrality of the African experience for African people,” the particular African perspective that texturizes and hybridizes the in-between writing of historical facts and personal events relies on distinct coordinates of allochthonous memory in both texts. Allochthonous memory creates a pattern that modulates the arbitrariness of facts, however much spectacularly, on the basis of ethical imperatives that collapse—in intertextual terms of memory and ontology—what Frantz Fanon (1952, p. 7) in *Black Skins, White Masks* describes as the colonial zone of being and the zone of non-being that defines the ontological being of the colonized self. This readily calls to mind what Lewis R. Gordon (2015, p. 2) describes as Fanonian ethics “premised on the humanistic thesis of not alienating human beings from human institutions.” Elsewhere, in the context of Holocaust memory, Anne Rothe has identified the paradoxical denial of the “core identity of vicarious victimhood, only to claim this epistemologically and ethically untenable but culturally dominant and coveted subject position for [the autobiographer]” (Rothe, 2018, p. 2). Denial and refusal are articulated through an ethical transformation.

In relation to this ethical transformation through allochthonous memory, Khumalo in *Touch My Blood* recalls how his father was forced by a white medical inspector to drop his pants in front of all men as he queued for employment in an office where his penis and testicles were probed with a stick:

Outside the hallowed confines of the Native Affairs offices, black men never spoke about their experiences at the Papi Office as it was called. Black people

could joke about anything including death, but they couldn't joke about what happened inside the Pipi Office. My father was obviously angry at this dehumanisation.

(*Touch My Blood*, p. 28)

The memory and textual re-articulation of Khumalo's father's dehumanisation in the Pipi Office, as it was, clearly demonstrates that the perspective he adopts lends—at a very personal level ethical color. Having painted a picture of his father as “a mumbling country bumpkin” (p. 17) the narrator enacts an act of redemption expressed as what has come to be elucidated as an ethics of memory:

. . . remembering people we care about; remembering is part of the caring and there is therefore an ethical duty to remember those we care about and, I would add, to remember also what is significant to the relationship.

(Coullie, 2014, p. 200)

The quest to recapture that experience of dehumanization that attended Mandlakayise Khumalo's attempt at getting employment adduces a sympathy, a measure of care that is even more ethical than merely filial. The Pipi Office epitomizes the lack of ontological density in the institutions that alienate them. Ironically, it also atomizes it to the testicles and penis of black men who seek employment. Lewis R. Gordon captures this situation in crisp Fanonian terms:

The black is marked by the dehumanising bridge between individual and structure posed by antiblack racism; the black is, in the end, “anonymous”, which enables “the black” to collapse into “blacks” whereas “blacks” is not a proper name, antiblack racism makes it function as such, as a name of familiarity that closes off the need for further knowledge. Each black is, thus, ironically nameless by virtue of being named “black”. So blacks find themselves, Fanon announces at the outset, not structurally regarded as human beings. They are problematic beings, beings locked in what he calls “a zone of nonbeing”. What blacks want is not to be problematic beings, to escape from that zone. They want to be human in the face of a structure that denies their humanity.

(Gordon, 2005, p. 3)

From the very opening scene in Ottawa, Khumalo in *Touch My Blood* lays bare the stark apartheid conditions and both of his texts respond “critically to the brutal conditions under which many black people live as well as the



existential interdictions all black people are forced to endure” (Moten, 2013, p. 237). His reaction to the assault on ontological security by “maiming the adversary” is painted in broad dramatic strokes: “With the single-mindedness of a pervert and the casual air of a baker kneading dough, you reach out and grab his testicles and squeeze” (p. 9). This sheer suddenness—“a perfect way to maim or silence an adversary” (p. 9) spectacularly reappears in the childhood memory of Sizwe the protagonist in the subsequent novel:

... the black boy saw his adversary taking a quick gulp from the bottle of paraffin. Just as quickly, the yellow boy spat into his face, and flicked a matchstick. Boom!

(*Seven Steps* 10)

## Sutured Between Metafiction and Biofiction: The Layered Text

Layers in the historiographic metafiction of *Seven Steps to Heaven* reappear when Thulani is an alter ego and, as such, remains inextricably a part of the protagonist Sizwe’s split self. He is part of the layered onion necessary for the formulaic cooking of soup in the life of the protagonist. This layerdness, as it were, is understood as an indelibly encoded aphorism from Sizwe’s mother:

People are like onions, his mother used to say, they come in layers. ‘When I was young, if I made soup and I was chopping onions’ – that’s what she would be thinking. Layers, everyone has layers. You have to see them in yourself and others.

(*Seven Steps*, p. 28)

The same holds true for *The Oneness of Two in Three*, the novel within the novel (an avatar of *Seven Steps*, actually), which is a ploy to “do a postmodern thing” but also *Seven Steps*’s double in a broader scheme of “self-reflexive writing that violates conventions of verisimilitude” (Dalley, 2014, p. 171). It is more accurate to describe the two filiated and overlayed texts under discussion as self-consciously merged into one memoric text “that critiques historical discourse through the ironic tropes of historiographic metafiction [such as they are borne out in the] metafictional exploration of allegorical realism [that] is apparent in the novel’s most striking element: the intertextual relation” (Dalley, 2014, pp. 171–172). Indeed, the intertextual relations between *Touch My Blood* (2006) and *Seven Steps to Heaven* contest and reconfigure history through allochthonous memory. For instance, in *Seven*

*Steps* the indexing of experience through the deixes of time uses allegory for lending color to a life-changing fact: "I lost my virginity on the same day that Mandela was released from prison" (p. 94). Release, in the same breath, accrues another sense of a double-entendre: the sexual connotation of ejaculation and termination of virginity. Related to this, in an overlaid sense, in *Touch My Blood* the release of Mandela terminates the relative peace that obtained prior:

Early in April 1990, almost two months after the release of Nelson Mandela, the violence was everywhere. Almost every day new outrages were reported. Each one more brutal than the last.

(*Touch My Blood*, p. 185)

## Allochthonous Memory and Incorporation

A recent study (Masemola, 2017) has shown that this kind of cross-writing and hybridization has been used by early writers like Bloke Modisane and filmographers to ostensibly bring to view a tragic entry into "unpredictable settings and debauched existence in the cinematic idiom of film noir" (p. 91). In addition, Fred Khumalo's narrator in *Seven Steps* recounts a scene of losing a friend by foregrounding it with the opening gambit: "Another cinematic flash of memory" (p. 12). It is significant that Pauline Reid (2014) uses the concept "paradoxical incorporation" to describe a situation where the novel's actual author appears "as a metaphysic that assumes materiality" (p. 231). Such incorporation is important as it ascribes primacy to the intertextual archive of memory constituted by the specter of the novel's author. The ontological presence of the protagonist author is partly modulated by the visibility of his face on the back sleeve of *The Oneness of Two in Three*. The latter is a text that allows him to assume materiality once he is remembered by a South African author who haunts another in the Zimbabwean capital of Harare in a double perspective that inscribes meaning to what Ronit Frenkel (2013) calls "transnational connectivity" (p. 26). For instance, there is a clear contestation of the meaning of the humanity of black identity and its experience among South Africans whether based in the inside or the outside; and Khumalo's narrative defines pathways of painful (not stunted) growth in a form of intertextuality that straddles allochthonous memory and nostalgia.

Between the two texts caught up in cross-writing, allochthonous memory also becomes a spectacular capture of the lack of ontological security in Fred Khumalo being himself as a young man, as separate and distinct from the generalized, if totalized, Zulu identity that was manipulated by divisive Bantustan designs:

When I was born in 1966, the enchanted past of the Zulu empire was but a distant memory. Indeed, in some people's minds, it was a myth too grand to have been a reality. The pride of place that the Khumalos once held in the affairs of the Zulu nation was history. The very circumstances in which I was born were a far cry from the tales of the aristocratic pedestal which we, the Khumalos, are supposed to have occupied with the blessings of King Shaka.

When I was conceived, my father was working as a stablehand at the horse-breeding and training farm run by the South African Jockey's Academy, situated just outside Pinetown. My mother was one of a number of women who washed and cooked for the trainee jockeys at this academy. Why my parents were attracted to one another is still a mystery to me. They were poles apart in terms of upbringing, class, religion, levels of education.

(*Touch My Blood*, p. 20)

## The Burden of the Memory of Traces: Contexts of Paratexts

As in *Seven Steps*, Khumalo recalls his early years in Durban and abroad with witty humor, without a need to overeagerly pursue a peculiarly South African or Zulu ethnic memory of traces. Rather, in both cases the narrator focuses on childhood using either parents or a friend as focalizers. For example, Sizwe's mother in *Seven Steps* is Thoko (pp. 15-16), the namesake of Fred Khumalo's actual mother, Thokozile (p. 28) in *Touch My Blood*. As earlier pointed out, his father Mandlakayise as was described in the autobiography also resurfaces as Sizwe's father Mandla. But these focalizers provide a structure to the narrative of allochthonous memory in *Seven Steps*. However, whilst Judith Lutge Coullie cautions that "we cannot entirely bring memory traces under conscious control" (p. 195), it is also worth considering what Gilles Deleuze (1983) observes:

The memory of traces is itself full of hatred. Hatred or revenge is hidden even in the most tender and loving memories. The ruminants of memory disguise this hatred by a subtle operation which consists in reproaching themselves with everything which, in fact, they reproach the being whose memory they pretend to cherish.

(Deleuze, p. 117)

Judith Coullie generally echoes the concerns raised by Margalit's (2002, p. 200) point that "memory breathes revenge as often as it breathes reconciliation." This a slightly different sense delineated by Deleuze's discernment of

the hidden hatred or revenge as exemplified in the one instance illustrated by the violence that Fred Khumalo unleashes in an Ottawa nightclub. In the other subsequent instalments, it becomes clear in Fred Khumalo's description of the internecine violence involving political organizations such as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and the United Democratic Front (UDF). In a sense, within the perspective of allochthonous memory, the Ottawa incident—based on disagreement about political issues—is an allegorical reflection of larger-scale internecine conflict between political opponents:

I ended up in Canada. And on the night in question was with my fellow interns at the African Club, a haunt for African expatriates in Ottawa. We were relaxed and enjoying ourselves and eventually were introduced to a South African who had been in the country a long time. We were overjoyed, believing he would be our guide in this strange land.

“So, you guys tell me you from home, huh?” There was a slight twang to his voice. “Now, say this to me, why are black people fighting against each other seeing that the white man is ready to give them back power and land?”

Above the din of the music we tried to explain the complex political situation at home. When ANC supporters killed supporters of Azanian People's Organisation, yet both organisations claimed to be fighting for black liberation, you were bound to be confused. Add the Inkatha Freedom Party to the equation, you were bound to lose whoever you were trying to enlighten to the intricacies of South African politics.

(p. 9)

The dimension of allegory in the novel finds prominence in the thirteenth chapter of *Seven Steps*, where disappearing acts due to the conflict between the United Democratic Front and the Inkatha Freedom Party also refer to the elopement and sexual escapades of the Anglican Reverend Tembe with Lovey, the shebeen queen's daughter. The latter and the randy reverend's son Thulani confront him about his aberrant ways in the short chapter Seventeen: “The Return of the Shepherd” (pp. 108–109). The resulting conflict becomes symptomatic of the dialogical content of allegory.<sup>3</sup>

Considering Khumalo's narrative about how—beyond the Ottawa nightclub incident—he had been recruited or dragged to be part of the internecine conflict at a time when he was a university student, it expresses neither hatred nor revenge. Khumalo takes the ethical stance of choosing not to merely recount his life as that of a victim of political circumstances and totalizing history. Rather, Khumalo inaugurates a paradoxical affirmation by refusal.

Here refusal means that the self can no longer be “contained within the parameters of the narrating and narrated ‘I’” (Coullie, 1996, p. 32).

Such refusal becomes apparent in *Seven Steps* when the protagonist who is a writer by vocation like Fred Khumalo has a “mobility that is enabled by a multiplicity of alter egos” (Masemola, 2015, p. 17). However, the paradox of affirmation by refusal underscores a level of tension and conflict in such a re-inauguration of Fred Khumalo’s personal ontological history embedded in allochthonous memory. The structure of the narrative of allochthonous memory is better understood as metalepsis: “a trope-reversing trope, a figure of a figure” (Gates, 1983, p. 586). Read within the scheme of metalepsis, then, “holy” Nelson Mandela himself is indexed through his poster that hangs in a shebeen and is described as “the flavour of the century, in various poses”(p. 2) alongside “a menagerie posters featuring liquor advertising, half-naked black models, soccer stars, musicians”(p. 2). The deliberate vulgarization and pedestrianization, as it were, of the respected political figure is as much iconoclastic as it is antonymic. This other side of Mandela, his unholy double, comes up in a conversation that disavows his heroism:

‘Mandela did fuckall for you and me. In fact his release is the beginning of a long process of betrayal of our cause. He was released on their own terms, on the terms of the white world.’ ‘Of course no one is saying Mandela was the be-all and end-all of our struggle,’ Kokoroshe ventured, but he is a very important symbol of it. . . But of course no single individual holds the key to our liberation, not the name of Steve Biko, not Sisulu. . .’(p. 94)

## Continuous Doubling and Paratextuality

Fred Khumalo’s father and mother appear in both paratexts, although the one is autobiographical and the other fictional, with their names spelt out. Further, Thulani is displaced by Patrick as a double: Thulani is now Freedom Cele and publishes his stories under the pseudonym Vusi Mntungwa. Patrick thus becomes the double of a double of Sizwe’s light-skinned childhood friend whom Sizwe remembers differently. Such symptomatic doubling of characters is encapsulated by Cheryl Stobie’s (2011, p. 485) oft-muted observation that there is an element of “doubling” in the *Seven Steps* novel. As a function of allochthonous memory, this doubling also goes beyond fiction to double the characters of real persons identified in the *Touch My Blood* autobiographical narrative of *Touch My Blood*. Invariably, all characters have at least a double in the form of an alter ego as focus of unification necessary for decoding the novel’s transnational allochthonous memory. Doubling is symptomatic of the multifarious dimension the allochthonous scheme of things is not limited to characters such as Thulani Tembe and

Sizwe Dube or Sis Lettie or Sis Joy. The mirror leitmotif also functions to highlight the figuration-cum-apparition of Thulani his alter ego in it, thus becoming less an object of narcissism but a reflection of existential angst associated with the fear of the tragic persona he is at once developing into and denying.<sup>4</sup>

For Sizwe Dube the writer to change himself into a success story or rehabilitated self, he has to consider the spectral man in the mirror, viz., his double Sizwe Tembe author of *Ramu the Hermit* and nom de plume for churning out *The Oneness of Two in Three*, yet another paratext. Change bespeaks less privilege than a focus of unification of the kind described by Judith Coullie (2014)—following Avishai Margalit (2002) and Paul Ricoeur (2004)—as one of “a variety of memory practices [that] bring to public attention reminders of apartheid, a past that must be remembered so that it will strengthen relationships amongst once-divided citizens and so that iniquities will not be repeated” (p. 195). That episode in an Ottawa club forces a moment of reckoning:

Memories and questions flooded my mind. Again, the ball-clenching incident surfaced. Was it just coincidence that violence always followed me wherever I went? Was I like Shakespeare’s sprits “. . . doom’d for a certain term to walk the night. . .”? By township standards, I was mild-mannered. But no matter how I chose to look at it, no matter how many times I told myself that I was a boy from the mean streets of Durban trying to eke out a living in a mean world, I could not help noticing that I was descending into another kind of hell. The skeletons that I thought were safely locked away in the catacombs of history were now rattling in my mind.

I sat down to write my story. (p. 12)

Further to elucidate this particular line of flight, or what Khumalo describes as a “descent into hell” (p. 12), the narrative of allochthonous memory that arises between the two texts yields a story that explains his family origins around Durban and how growing up in that family attests to a simultaneous becoming and belonging. This is particularly foregrounded by the testing of the family pedigree by peculiar habits and the unstable political climate involving the IFP and the UDF. This affords Khumalo occasion to revisit, recall and heal as he reassesses what tore the ties that bind communities. Significantly, the cross-writing that emblemizes the ethics of allochthonous memory becomes clear in an intertextual moment that describes the rituals involved in the preparation of UDF warriors for the revenge that followed the April 4, 1990 killings by the IFP henchmen:

Shortly after the 4 April massacre people felt the need for revenge. UDF fighters were summoned from surrounding townships. An inyanga a pot of *intelezi*, a herb used by warriors in preparation for war. Each warrior was

sprinkled with the mixture which would make them brave and fearsome in the face of the enemy and fortify them against enemy bullets. They then jumped over a huge fire, shouting, “*Ngadla mina!*” – I’ve hit him! (p. 191)

In an intertextual turn, in *Seven Steps to Heaven* (2007), Khumalo proceeds to use a very personalized form of historical metafiction to “remember the incident differently,” in a mode of textured narrative that is hybridized into a *trompe l’oeil* perspective of (personalized/textualized) history through allochthonous memory:

The final step in the preparation for war would see each warrior—gun or spear in hand—being made to jump over a fire, while at the same time stabbing the air with his weapon, and shouting: ‘Ngadla! I have hit him’.

(p. 59)

For the texturing of this fire-jumping ritual to be understood in its proper context, we need to appreciate *Seven Steps* as being in a mode of reinventing a long perspectival horizon of recalling the past from multiple temporal and spatial deixes that constitute layered substrata that are aesthetically and ethically removed from the original historical setting it describes. In this mode, it indexes an inventive reading of what Ronit Frenkel (2013) delineates as characteristically “palimpsestic” (p. 25): the transitional experience in *Seven Steps* is already present in the *Touch My Blood* autobiography. It simply requires a deformation of the reality of the warring United Democratic Front (UDF) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) factions in both filiated texts in order to deal with loss and imbue a new dispensation of peace that departs from the burden of violent history:

Since the mode of historiographic metafiction in which Fred Khumalo writes also concerns ‘the re-conceptualisation of history and parody’ (cf. Hutcheon, 1989), it is crucial to understand how the writer’s vocation turns him into an ontological monstrosity before he recognises the fullness of his multiplicity.

(Masemola, p. 21)

## Conclusion

In sum, this article brings to view the palimpsestic intersection between Fred Khumalo’s autobiographical *Touch My Blood* and his novel, *Seven Steps to Heaven*, which is usually read as a follow-up on to Khumalo’s first novel *Bitches Brew*. It reveals the intertextual turn between the two texts by showing how, amongst others, Sizwe’s mother in *Seven Steps* is Thoko (pp. 15–16), the namesake of Fred Khumalo’s actual mother, Thokozile (p. 28) in *Touch My Blood*. In

the same turn, the article uses the doubling function of allochthonous memory to show the re-appearance or doubling of Fred Khumalo's actual father who was Mandlakayise in *Touch My Blood* (17) but reappears with a contracted name of "Mandla" in *Seven Steps* (12–17). In the same vein, there are further instances of the reappearance of the mayor Sishi, even Fred Kockott caricatured as Patrick McGuiness. There is Fred Khumalo's turn to Hare Krishna in *Touch My Blood* (pp. 176–77) reincarnated as an Interlude chapter called "Ramu the Hermit" in *Seven Steps* and also the recasting of the violent Thilo Mkhize as Thulani Tembe. Between the two paratexts, one discerns Fred Khumalo's own interracial experiences at a white Technikon Natal, the problematic ownership of a soccer team, the restaging of the political shenanigans of Reverend Ngcibi in *Touch My Blood* as Reverend Tembe in *Seven Steps*. All these doubling instances index a relationship between these two texts through allochthonous memory in ways that have not been articulated previously before. Khumalo is enunciating the difference of memory with the ostensible purpose of assembling personal history that is commensurate with forging ontological security—ranged against the force and pull of institutions that are also inhumane.

Having so framed the ritual as parody and allegory, amongst others, he makes a point of establishing—in a Gatesian sense of black signifying—a paradoxical affirmation by refusal, as part of the expression of allochthonous memory. The ethical dimension of such a memory renders the significance of the ritual beyond a simple understanding of it as a litote. It is a re-conceptualization: an Afrocentric transformation through ethical intertextuality of personalized history and fiction which, in its ethical use of memory, "avoids ritualised commemoration, in which excesses of memorialisation employ myth so as to fix memories in a kind of reverential relationship to the past" (p. 205). In transferring allochthonous memory from one autobiographical text to a metafictional text, he uses the outward growth of onion layers in a fashion akin to what Kurmann and Do (p. 230) elsewhere identify as "a boat to reach the other shore." Allochthonous memory is the boat from memoir to the other shore of fiction. It functions to put one layer of cultural memory over another, across genres and borders. Most readers are unaware, to date, that even the book that was described as the *Oneness of Two in Three* is the original provenance and avatar of *Seven Steps to Heaven*. Khumalo added a new titular layer rather than leave that boat, as it were, for another shore. It is inextricably intertwined with *Touch My Blood* as but one facet of Fred Khumalo's allochthonous memory.

Basically, the layered structure of the boat reflects the buoyancy of allochthonous memory amid the cross-currents of the mobility of what Carolin and Frenkel (2019) aptly describe as "transcultural flows" (p. 14). The transformation inherent in this mobility is antithetical to either a reverential relationship or faithful representation of the event because it is at this point remembered within one of the pentangular frames of allochthonous memory:



ethics. Mobility encapsulates the Afrocentric concern with continuity, extension and harmony. All of these forms of continuity and extension, from memoir to novel, attest to cultivating what Ama Mazama (2001) identifies as “a consciousness of victory as opposed to dwelling on oppression” (p. 389). Thus, in the Epilogue of *Touch My Blood* he confesses: “For so many of us the past is a place of hurt, and, in a sense, this book is my own private Truth and Reconciliation Commission” (p. 196). This, then, explains why allochthonous memory inheres in the deliberate yoking of a fictional text *Seven Steps* to an autobiographical *Touch My Blood*: to redeem the memory of traces, where Fred Khumalo reproaches himself “with everything which, in fact, they reproach the being whose memory they pretend to cherish” (Deleuze, p. 117). Fred Khumalo’s priority, in an Afrocentric consciousness of victory, is to sublimate traces of hatred and hurt—epitomized by interne-cine violence between the UDF and IFP—by imposing an Afrocentric logic of harmony between the past and the present, hard facts and lofty imagination for his own TRC. More than a *soi-disant* “political and moral autopsy of South Africa,” as Liberty Hove (2018, p. 51) would rather have it, the allochthonous memory between Fred Khumalo’s paratexts become what Asante (1990) calls a paradigm “that reinforces the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data” (p. 6).

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### Notes

1. In a recent article of *Comparative Literature* on how Marianne Hirsch’s related idea of postmemory, Alexander Kurmann and Tess Do (2018, pp. 218–234) also observe a similar aim of eradicating what Marianne Hirsch calls the “temporal and spatial remove” “between the traditional markers of before and after as a later generation of writers reconfigure the memorial timeline of their diasporic community.”
2. It has been recently observed (Masemola, 2016, p. 347) that: “The writing of a ‘self’ that has to constantly overcome alienation and prejudice questions the

conventional assumption that a successful autobiography can only be written from the vantage point of fulfillment. Most African autobiographies adopt a narrative structure that attests to the numerous constraints for growth and success in either the colonial spaces, the decolonized polity, or the cosmopolitan space. Examples include Zakes Mda's *Sometimes there is a Void: Memoirs of an Outsider* (2011), Chris van Wyk's *Shirley, Goodness and Mercy* (2006), and Fred Khumalo's (2006) *Touch my Blood*."

3. This, according to Valentin Mudimbe (2013, pp. 28–29), is best understood through recourse to Walter Benjamin, that is, "in the sense of a cultural attitude (*Anschauung*) and as a manner of visualising something (*Anschauungsweise*)" with a clear intention of posing signifiers and questions such that in the end we have "allegories that bring us in dialog or separate us in confrontation."
4. Each time the desperate adult Sizwe drifts into a Thulani Tembe phantasmagoria, the reader can almost hear the subtly referenced the allusion to the refrained chorus of a song by Michael Jackson (1988), that is, "Man in the Mirror":  
 I'm starting with the man in the mirror  
 I'm asking him to change his ways  
 And no message could have been any clearer  
 If you want to make the world a better place  
 Take a look at yourself, and then make a change  
 (<http://www.metrolyrics.com/>)

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